

February 28, 2012 - Testimony on Bill #42 at the Public Hearing of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee. My name is Barbara Richards. I am a Professor of Sociology at Housatonic Community College, a former member of the Standing Advisory Committee to the Board of Governors for Higher Education, and an alternate member of the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Board of Regents. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am here to speak in support of Bill #42.

I believe that the most important part of the bill is the word "unitary". It is important to know how the current community college representatives to the Faculty Advisory Committee were chosen. The system office asked the Academic Deans to conduct democratic elections on each campus. Some Deans asked the Chairs of the Senates or Councils to run the elections, while others held elections at meetings of the faculty.

The first stage of the elections was completed on each campus, resulting in twelve nominees for three positions as representatives to the FAC, plus an unspecified number of alternates.

At this point in the process three unions met with the new Vice-President for Human Resources of the Board of Regents. The unions proposed that they should name the community college members of the FAC. Their proposal was accepted and the unions then made their selections. All of the community college representatives and alternates currently serving on the FAC were named by these three unions.

I am a strong supporter of unions but I see their mission as distinct from that of a Faculty Advisory Committee that has input on matters such as mission statements or policies on transfer and articulation. Unions have a duty to prioritize the welfare of their members, while the FAC should focus on the needs of the students and of the state.

On another part of the bill, the insertion of the word "teaching" before the word "faculty": I would like to suggest that the FAC be enlarged to include one representative per campus from the community colleges and three representatives per campus from the CSUs. This would result in more effective communication by the FAC with all parts of the new combined system. With direct elections and a larger committee the teaching faculty would be strongly represented on the FAC and it would not be necessary to insert the word "faculty". It would be useful for the committee to have the input of some non-teaching representatives as well.

Finally, a question: If the bill passes, would the intent be for the existing FAC to serve out its two-year term or for the Faculty Senates to hold new elections soon after the statute takes effect?

Thank you very much. I would be happy to answer any questions.